



the DURHAM UNION

STANDING COMMITTEE: THURSDAY 6TH FEBRUARY 2025

In Attendance:

Oliver Dawson – Treasurer

Oliver Lycett – Secretary

Maddy Frank – Social Secretary

Robbie Bono – Equalities Officer

Anna Beskhmel'nitskaya – Publicity Officer

Joshua Doherty – Custodian

Haya Chaudhri – Debating Treasurer

Reece Short – President-elect

Olivia Dunn – Welfare Officer

Apologies

Charles Aldous – President

Severino Bonvini – Director of Debating

The meeting began at 16:15; the Secretary is taking the minutes.



Item One: Welfare Discussion

The committee began by discussing the potential to move the Welfare Officer to the Standing Committee, as well as the importance of opening nominations for a new Welfare Officer. The Welfare Officer made clear her preference that her successor already have nightline training. The Social Secretary raised the option of involving the Office Manager and Trustees with the selection of the Welfare Officer. It was agreed by the committee that involving Nigel, the EDI Trustee, and the Office Manager, would be beneficial to the process.

The committee discussed the possibility of more officers being nightline trained, agreeing that this would be a positive and worthwhile move.

Conducting regular drop-in sessions was agreed as an important role for the Welfare Officer going forward – it was suggested that the Office could be used as a venue, potentially 15:30-16:30 when it is vacant in order to uphold anonymity and privacy.

It was agreed that the Welfare Officer should be more visible, noting a role for the Officer in the context of the Equalities Instagram.

The committee discussed the matter of archiving material on the Welfare email account, or sending it to the Office Manager before being deleted. This would preserve anonymity, but also an important way of keeping records.

Item Two: Complaints Panel

The committee agreed that the current system suffers from practical issues, including the slowness and inefficiency of the process. The Custodian commented on this, highlighting how out of touch and slow to act the Trustees can be. The Committee also discussed the provision of issuing suspensions whilst investigations are ongoing – in effect, some form of ‘emergency complaints panel.’ It was suggested that a unanimous Standing vote would be utilised, before the Trustees choose to act.

The key consensus of the committee was that the process needs to be much more responsive and efficient. The Secretary made clear the need to consult the Trustees before any amendments be proposed and passed. The committee was in agreement.



The qualifications for the student representative were discussed, noting the recommendations of the EDI agreement. It was suggested that a member of the Equalities Committee could replace the student representative.

The committee delineated between matters observed by the Standing Committee, versus interpersonal complaints raised privately through the complaints system.

Whichever Trustee who is in a position to respond and act the fastest should be looped into the complaints process. The committee discussed imposing a time limit on complaints investigations.

Item Three: EDI Plan

The Equalities Officer outlined commitments yet to be fulfilled. It was agreed by the committee that further consideration should be made to the potential of integrating the Equalities Committee into the complaints process.

It was consensus that the complaints process be successfully reformed by the end of the term.

The Equalities Officer raised the matter of the revised EDI Plan due later this year be composed and ratified in a more pluralistic way – beyond the remit of just the president.

The committee discussed plans to introduce a whistleblowing system, and also publish minutes. It was agreed to make public the minutes of General, Standing and Equalities Committee be made publicly available on the website regarding minutes from this meeting onwards.

The meeting discussed setting up a specialist Access Fund which alumni could donate to.

The meeting concluded at 17:20.